

Employee FRONTLINE

A newsletter from the WA State Employee Assistance Program

Talk with Children about Ebola

Ebola is in the news. And as with any terrifying news that receives mass media attention, children will eventually notice it and possibly have their own anxious reaction. Help children feel safe, and explain the event in a way that matches their age and developmental ability. On the upside, the Ebola crisis and related questions are an opportunity to teach children two key life lessons: that health and safety are important and that it is good to ask questions about any concerns. Key strategies for helping children include giving them reassurance; clarifying facts and dispelling myths; and letting them know experts are working on understanding the virus, finding a vaccine, and protecting people.



Let Go of Money Mismanagement Denial



Using denial to cope with money troubles is a common roadblock to help. Denial is about hoping that a solution will appear even without a plan to make it happen. If this sounds like you, avoid drifting where this torrent of stress may lead. Your first step may not be financial counseling, but rather short-term mental health counseling to deal with fear of

change, fear of living on a no-frills budget, and fear of conflict as you petition your spouse to join the cause. After this prep work, allow the mental health counselor to guide you to suitable resources for financial counseling. Mental health counseling often makes sense when a personal problem has lingered for a lengthy period and has been managed by denial and avoidance. Counseling also helps increase the likelihood that you will stick with the plan later if gets tough.

Avoid Holiday Heart Syndrome

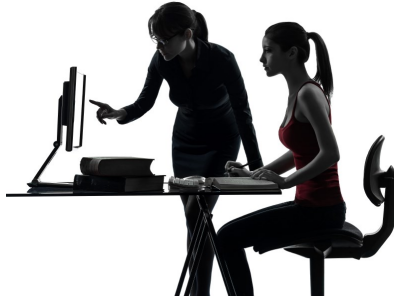
Researchers and members of the medical profession have long observed that the holiday season is notorious for heart attacks, heart failures, and newly diagnosed arrhythmias. Don't second-guess or hesitate to treat what might be symptoms of a heart attack during this time (or at any time) of year—phone 9-1-1. Many factors may play a role in cardiac events, but one little-publicized phenomenon is called “holiday heart syndrome.” The term was coined to describe the sudden onset of cardiac reactions linked to heavy drinking. These may include a racing or pounding heart, possibly to the point of feeling dizzy or faint; chest pain; panic; arrhythmia; severe tachycardia; and shortness of breath. While socializing with alcohol, be aware that heavy drinking affects metabolism and is especially demanding on the heart. Casual drinkers, too, can be at risk for holiday heart syndrome as they try to keep pace with family and friends at all-day-drinking get-togethers that may last into the evening. Holiday heart syndrome can be a serious condition for someone who already has heart disease, too. Avoid alcohol abuse and binge drinking.



Frontline Employee

Master the Teachable Moment

A teachable moment is an opportunity in which circumstances make teaching easiest. This is a powerful tool in parenting and therefore deserves strong consideration. Since teenagers are typically the most resistant to parental advice, parents value teachable moments. However, they can seem few and far between. The good news is that you can facilitate their appearance. The key is increasing the number of activities that put you in close quarters with your teen. Cook together with your teen, talk with your spouse in front of your teen about something important like finances, ask what your teen thinks about an emotional or shocking news story, or tell a story about yourself and a hard lesson you learned. Think periodically about teachable moments whenever you are together, and you will spot more of them as they present themselves.



Stop Drowsy Driving

Sixty percent of adult drivers admit to driving a vehicle while feeling drowsy in the past year, and more than one-third have fallen asleep at the wheel—many repeatedly. Drowsy driving is a problem contributing to an estimated 1,500 deaths per year. If you are a young adult, a parent with small children, or a shift worker, then you are in the highest risk groups. Men fall asleep behind the wheel twice as often as women do. Caution: If you decide to pull over to nap, a motel is the way to go. If you decide to use a rest area, only use a safe, appropriate rest area, and follow commonsense rules to stay safe. Never park on the shoulder of a highway to nap, and never sleep in a running car.



Quit with the Great American Smoke Out

Forty-six million Americans still smoke. In Canada, it's 5 million people. Any day is a good day to quit, but the Great American Smokeout on November 20 may be when you finally do it. On that day, attempt not to use tobacco for 24 hours; then keep it going into day two and so forth. Watch out for the three most common relapse triggers: strong negative emotions from nicotine withdrawal, hanging out with smokers while attempting to quit, and drinking alcohol.



Write Your Performance Improvement Plan

Having performance-at-work issues? Consider writing your own performance improvement plan. Don't shy away from this tool that you may associate only with employees who have bigger performance problems. Employees who are proactive and take initiative when performance lags are an impressive and rare group. Join them with these steps: 1) Make a list of the deficiencies you believe need attention. 2) Ask yourself these diagnostic questions: a) Did you receive appropriate training? b) Do you understand the job expectations? c) Are there communication, workplace, or personal roadblocks in your life impeding success? 3) Discuss your list with your boss. Ask for input. Be open, and lay it all out. 4) Now create the action plan. Make your objectives clear, specific, and measurable, and give your goals deadlines—for example, "Within 30 days, I will produce five product reports on time by each Friday at 10 a.m." Also, devise interventions to address your roadblocks. Consider needs, resources, time, training, or coaching to meet your goals. Request short meetings with your boss at regular intervals to ensure accountability.

Prevent Medical Identity Theft

After using your health benefits, don't casually dismiss the statement that arrives marked "This is not a bill." This statement is your Explanation of Benefits (EOB). Check it for mistakes and to prevent medical identity theft, a crime involving the theft of personal information (SSN, etc.) to obtain medical care, buy drugs, or submit fake billings in your name. This crime can disrupt your life, damage your credit rating, and waste taxpayer dollars. Report errors, and review past records for inaccuracies.